

# Cow Green

## Site designations

Sandwiched between the two halves of Moorhouse – Upper Teesdale National Nature Reserve, North Pennine Moors Special Protection Area, Moorhouse-Upper Teesdale Special Area of Conservation and within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

## Location

Ten miles north west of Middleton-in-Teesdale. Turn off the B6277 at Langdon Beck.

## Access & facilities

There is a car park at Cow Green; however, there are no public toilets.

The Pennine Way passes close by Cow Green en route from Langdon Beck to High Cup Nick. Nearby, the foaming cataract of Cauldron Snout plunges dramatically down from the reservoir outflow, to form a spectacular confluence of the river Tees and Maize Beck, beneath Falcon Clints. The waterfall can be reached through the reserve on the dam access road. There is a nature trail which is wide enough to allow access by wheel chair. The area from the former boat house to the western end of the dam forms part of the National Nature Reserve managed by Natural England and public access and fishing are prohibited.

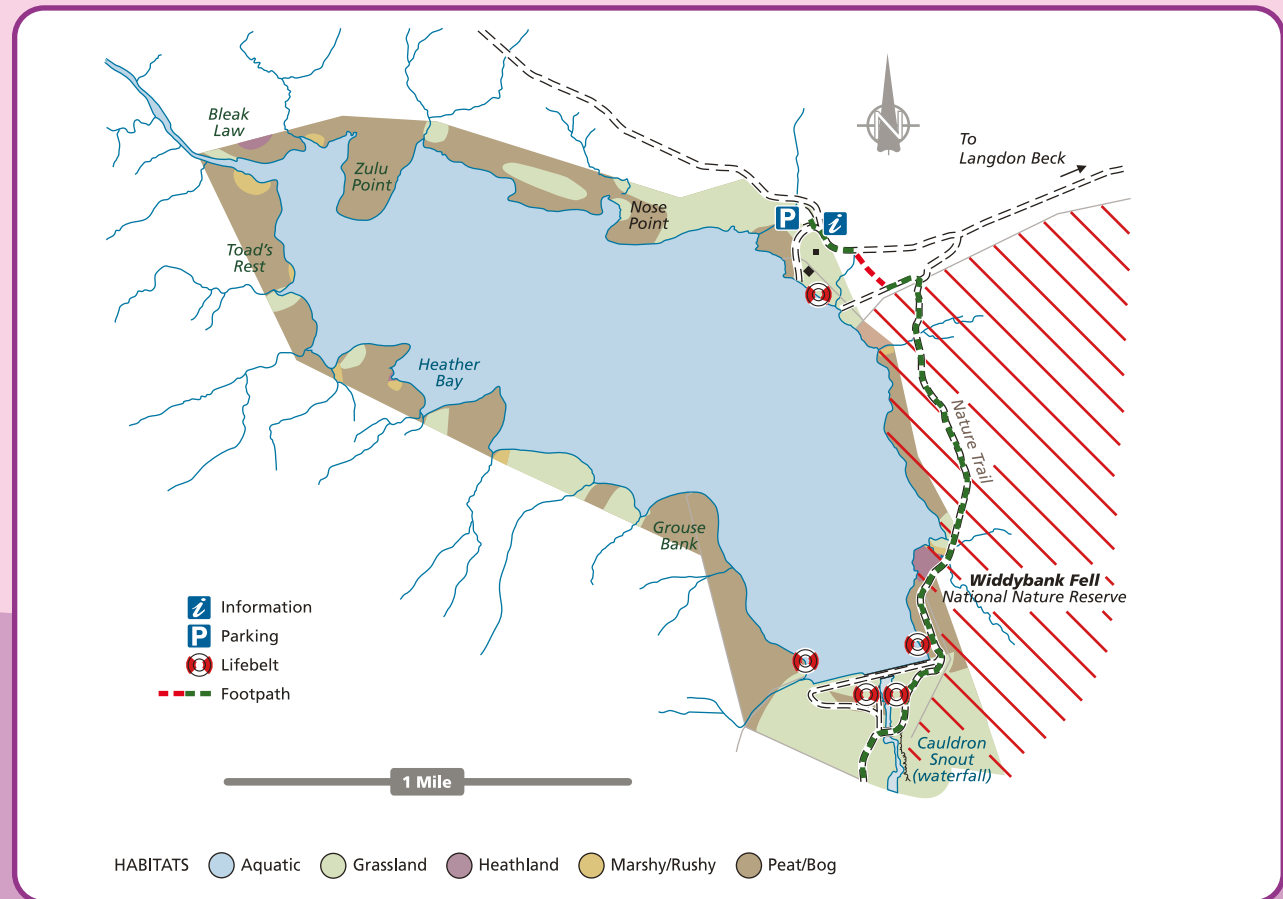
## Site

Cow Green was built in 1970 and is our highest reservoir at an altitude of 480 metres. It was formed in a shallow basin in the upper reaches of Teesdale.

Widdybank Fell on the north eastern shore is a National Nature Reserve (NNR) managed by Natural England. A variety of habitats are present within the NNR including upland hay meadows, pastures, juniper scrub, moorland and blanket bog.

This site is of international importance for its rare arctic alpine flora, which is unique to Great Britain.

The north western end of Cow Green borders the Moor House National Nature Reserve (NNR), which is of international



importance for its acid grassland, moorland and blanket bog habitats, which support a variety of upland birds; notably breeding waders.

## Habitats

The land adjacent to the reservoir is primarily blanket bog, typified by heather, cotton grass and bog moss with some flushed areas dominated by rushes and sedges. The most extensive areas of calcareous grassland, is characterised by fescues, blue moor grass and heath grass and occurs away from the reservoir margins on Widdybank Fell.

The south eastern part of the reservoir lies within the Upper

Teesdale National Nature Reserve (NNR); an internationally important site supporting rare arctic alpine plants such as spring gentian, bird's-eye primrose and the Teesdale violet.

## Birds

Cow Green, despite its large size, is too high and exposed to be an attractive habitat for many wildfowl; it also freezes most winters for up to two months or more depending on the weather. However, when conditions allow, mallard, teal and goosander are the most regular winter visitors. Other species that have been recorded include pochard, goldeneye, tufted duck, canada goose, gannet, wigeon, whooper swan and peregrine falcon.

Birds which breed on the moorland around Cow Green are those characteristic of upland areas; such as red grouse, golden plover, snipe, curlew, lapwing, dunlin, redshank, wheatear and meadow pipit. The margins of the reservoir provide breeding grounds for common sandpiper and oystercatcher, whilst the tributary streams support dippers. A pair of red-breasted merganser bred here for the first time in May 1994 and have continued to be recorded ever since.

A black-headed gull colony has been present since at least the early 1970s on Widdybank Fell and occasionally on a small island towards the eastern end of the reservoir (now usually submerged).



## Other wildlife

Palmate newts, common lizard and common frog have been recorded within the catchment of Cow Green as well as mink and stoat. Rabbits occur here in prolific numbers; they are a management concern because they selectively graze the calcareous grassland. Moles pose another management challenge for this fragile habitat.



## Further information

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